

plastic rings 34. However, the specification specifically teaches that "[a]ny body compatible metal and plastic having the requisite strength characteristics, and/or other physical characteristics may be used in the various embodiments of this invention." Col. 4 lines 55-58.

A person of ordinary skill in the relevant art would be aware that polyurethane; polyimide and polyethylene are commercially available in shore D hardness ranges which overlap, such that the polyurethane (the first material) of Willard **could** be harder than the polyethylene (the second material) of Willard. Therefore, Willard does not **inherently** anticipate claims 1-5 and 9-12, because it fails to teach, suggest or motivate the proper selection of a first material which is softer than the second material.

The following excerpts from the web pages listed support the assertion polyurethane and polyethylene come in overlapping ranges of hardness.

<http://www.polyurethane-1.com/hardness.htm>

Polyurethane elastomers can be formulated to cover a wide hardness range, from 30 Shore A to 85 Shore D.

[http://www.ptsuk.com/products/frmProd\\_Engineering.html](http://www.ptsuk.com/products/frmProd_Engineering.html)

-Riteflex polyester copolymer elastomers.

Unreinforced Shore D hardness range 40 to 77

Because the hardness ranges of the two material overlap, selection of materials does not inherently result in the first material being necessarily softer than the second material. A person of ordinary skill in the art could, based on the teachings of Willard select a polyester which is softer than the polyurethane sleeve material. The fact that the second selected material could be metal or be harder does not result in **inherent** anticipation if it could just as easily be softer than the first material.

Therefore, claims 1-5 and 9-12 are not considered anticipated by Willard.


Applicant respectfully requests that the amendment after final be entered and the rejection to claims 1-5 and 9-12 be withdrawn.

Respectfully submitted,

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